

PRINCIPLE NURSE CONSULTANT RESPONSE TO 1999 NCONA RESOLUTIONS

June 15, 2000

PROPOSAL 99-1

SUPPORT FOR THE REAUTHORIZATION OF P.L. 94-437

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT

NCON demonstrate support of the Reauthorization of P.L. 94-437 Title I Sections which directly impact Nursing Care in Indian Country

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT

The National Council of Nurse Administrators which consists of Nurse Administrators from, IHS, Tribal and Urban Health Programs, strongly support maintaining the unsolicited continuous funding of specific sections of Title I (Indian Health Manpower) up for renewal in P.L. 94-437

RESPONSE

Indian Health Nursing leadership has been involved in the on-going consultation with Indian Health/Tribal/Urban programs to amend and update the Indian Health Care Improvement Act. NCON drafted a letter in support of 437 Reauthorization. Kitty Rogers has been the Headquarters Project Manager for 437 Reauthorization activities; nurse consultants have represented nursing at local and regional meetings; and Pat Smith, Albuquerque Nurse Consultant and Celissa Stephens, Nurse Recruiter, attended the National planning meeting. The National 437 Steering Committee forwarded the final proposed bill to the Director of IHS and to each authorizing committee in the House and Senate. The entire document as proposed is available on the IHS website at www.ihs.gov.

The following is a summary of proposed changes of sections affecting nursing.

TITLE I

Section 102: General Requirements

NEW Section

Term "Health Professionals" used throughout to reflect the broadest view of what professions are included (rather than listing professions separately).
Replaces competitive grants and demonstrations with program authorizations.
More local discretion to address human resource development.
Scholarship and loan recipients already in the pipeline are protected from any new requirements.

Section 102: Health Professions Recruitment Program for Indians

Now Section 103

Term "grants" changed to funding.
"Indian" more clearly defined

Section 103: Health Professions Preparatory Scholarship for Indians

Now Section 104

Term "grants" replaced by "scholarship"
Scholarship assistance shall not be denied based solely on the basis of scholastic achievement as long as the student is maintained in good standing at an accredited institution.
Eligibility requirements amended so only persons who are Indian are eligible.

Section 104: Indian Health Professions Scholarship

Now Section 105 A and B.

Clarifies the Secretary's role as purely administrative

Requires that the recipient meet the service obligation "within the service area from which the scholarship was awarded", except in special circumstances and with agreement between Areas or programs.

Section 120: Matching Grants to Tribes for Scholarship Programs moved to this section.

Modified to allow Tribes or tribal organizations to use any source of funds for their 20% match.

Section 105: IHS Summer Extern Program

Now Section 107

Extern employment for scholarship recipients is a right within the Service, but discretionary for Tribes, tribal organizations and urban Indian programs.

Section 106: Continuing Education Allowances

Now Section 108

Replaces listing of qualified professions with the general term "health professionals".

Eliminates wording limiting the amount that can be used to establish post-doctoral training programs

Section 108: IHS Loan Repayment Program

Now Section 110

Eliminates specific wording defining percentage distribution for select disciplines, including the 25% once allocated to nursing

Section 109: Recruitment Activities

Now Section 112

Includes Tribes and tribal organizations in eligibility for site visits

Section 110: Tribal Recruitment Retention Program

Now Section 113.

Funding of innovative demonstration projects aimed at recruiting, placing and retaining health care professionals

Section 112: American Indians Into Nursing

Now Section 115

Changes terminology "nurse practitioner" to "advance practice nurse", throughout.

Deleted section on funding clinics for Native American health care at schools of nursing.

Section 114: INMED Program

Now Section 117

Section 117: Retention Bonus

Now Section 119

Available to "any" health professional"

Section 118: Nursing Residency Program (NECI)

Now Section 120

Eligible course work amended to include “advanced degrees in nursing and public health”-although not specifically stated, this could be interpreted as including masters and doctoral programs.

Obligated service decreased to “the amount of time during which the individual participates in the program.”

Eligibility requirements amended so only persons who are Indian are eligible.

Section 120: Matching Grants to Tribes for Scholarship Programs

Moved to Section 105 as noted previously

Section 122: USD Pilot Project

Now Section 123

Amended to read “health professionals” instead of listing specific professional categories.

Section 124: Scholarships

Specifies scholarships provided under Title I are non-taxable under the IRS code

(The specific wording reads “scholarships provided to individuals pursuant to this Title”, but a summary from the National Steering Committee indicates that it is clearly intended that “all scholarships, loans and repayments of loans” are non-taxable.

PROPOSAL 99-3

IHS LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT

The percentage of dedicated nursing funds for the Indian Health nursing program remain at least twenty-five percent of the total IHS Loan Repayment Program.

RESPONSE

Nursing only received 15% of loan repayment funding this cycle. As noted above, the proposed 437 Reauthorization revisions would eliminate specific percentages of loan repayment dollars for all categories. It has become more difficult to support the specific percentage for nurses in view of significant shortages in health care professions (e.g., pharmacists) who never received a specific allocation of dollars and relatively stable vacancy and turnover rates for nursing. However, Indian country is beginning to experience the nursing shortage that has been predicted for the Nation. This could be used as leverage to obtain more loan repayment dollars for nursing.

Judy Enyart, Nurse Recruiter, is on the multidisciplinary work group, which continues look at loan repayment criteria and other issues. She will continue to advocate on behalf of nursing for additional funding. It may become necessary for you, local IHS, tribal, and urban nurse administrators, to report vacancy rates and other personnel statistics to enable her to support nursing arguments.

PROPOSAL 99-4

TAX EXEMPT STATUS FOR NURSING SCHOLARSHIPS

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT

IHS Scholarship awards should be tax exempt.

RESPONSE

As noted above, proposed wording of the 437 Reauthorization Act would make all scholarships under the law non-taxable.

PROPOSAL 99-5

NURSING CLASSIFICATION STANDARDS

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT

The current 610 classification standards for nursing be reviewed and revised to reflect nursing practice as it exists today.

RESPONSE

Headquarters Nursing and the National Council of Nursing strongly support the need for the review and revision of the nursing classification standards and has included this in the NCON Strategic Plan. Classification standards have not been changed for almost 30 years, but nursing certainly has changed. However, control of the 610 classification standards rests with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), not with IHS personnel. This makes revision difficult. When we first began to pursue this issue, we were informed by OPM that the Department of Defense was already working on revision. It was decided to let them pursue changes.

We have been unsuccessful in obtaining an update on the status of the revisions for this conference, but Headquarters Nursing will continue to pursue this issue.

PROPOSAL 99-6

REASSESSMENT AND INCREASE IN SPECIAL PAY

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT

Indian Health Service reassess special pay rates in relationship to current private sector salary and benefits offerings.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT

Indian Health Service pursue special pay raises

RESPONSE

Headquarters Nursing and NCON fully support this amendment and have included it in the NCON Strategic Plan. NCON is in the process of gathering data from the private sector regarding salaries and benefits and hope to have that phase completed by August. The issue of special pay for nursing was presented to the Executive Leadership Group by the NCON Chair last fall. Action was delayed due to the acute shortage of pharmacists and dentists, requiring intensive efforts to obtain incentives for them. We have been assured that the nursing issue will be moved forward now that special pay for dentists and pharmacists have been implemented. Headquarters Nursing and NCON will continue to monitor the progress of this issue.

PROPOSAL 99-7

FUNDING FOR INTERNSHIP FOR NEW GRADUATES IN ACUTE CARE SETTINGS

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT

Indian Health Service support the development and funding of a nurse internship program for new graduates in an acute care setting.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT

The Indian Health Service include funding for such internship in P.L. 94-437 reauthorization requests.

RESPONSE

No wording regarding this issue was included in the 437 Reauthorization proposal.

Headquarters Nursing and NCON acknowledge the need for support of new graduates. It is a major concern that facilities do not or cannot hire the many new graduates coming out of nursing scholarship programs. Lack of resources and support for orienting and mentoring these nurses has been cited as a major reason. Complaints received at headquarters are causing IHS leadership to reconsider the availability of nursing scholarships since we are not willing to hire scholarship recipients once they graduate.

IHS has funded an internship program in the past, however, it was deemed too expensive for the number of nurses it was able to turn out, and, therefore, canceled. Since that time, IHS nursing has periodically funded specialty training, including self-learning modules for nurses entering public health nursing. Most recently, however, the IHS Scholarship Program and Headquarters Nursing has funded the development of an 3 month long Internship Program in the Navajo Area. The modules for developed for this program will eventually be made available for any Area desiring them, once they have been evaluated. The program is scheduled to enroll it's first participants later this summer. You will be able to learn more about the program at the poster sessions.

Headquarters Nursing would also be willing to advocate for funds for Areas, Tribes or Urban Programs submitting a formal, well written and thought out, detailed proposal for an internship or similar program. We also recommend that you, the members of NCONA to resolve the issue of hiring new scholarship graduates within the I/T/Us.

PROPOSAL 99-9

SUPPORT FOR THE REAUTHORIZATION OF P.L. 94-437

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT

Section 118 be amended to provide financial support for a doctoral education level for nurses.

RESPONSE

As noted above, the proposed 437 Reauthorization includes wording supporting "advanced degrees in nursing and public health".